Protection of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth

September 2010

Government of Alberta

CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Government of Alberta.
Protection of sexually exploited children and youth.

This document is intended for:

Parents	✓
Child Caregivers	✓
Educators	✓
Mental Health Workers	✓
Child and Youth Workers	✓
Children and Youth	✓

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Introduction

Sexually exploited children and youth are victims of child abuse. The *Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act* (PChIP) was enacted in Alberta in 1999 and was amended to the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* (PSECA) in October 2007. The Act offers protection to children and youth who are involved in prostitution as victims of sexual abuse. In March 2001, the legislation was amended to enhance the protection offered to children and ensure their legal rights are safeguarded.

Under PSECA, police or a director of Children and Youth Services may apprehend and confine children who are at risk of sexual exploitation through their involvement or risk of involvement in prostitution for their protection and safety.

This resource is intended for use by all those involved with the care of children and youth. It includes information for parents, caregivers, professionals, communities and, most importantly, children and youth themselves.

A Note About Terminology

Prostitution is the trading of sex for money or anything else (e.g., food, a place to stay, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, a ride somewhere). The definition of **sex trade** is basically the same, but also implies that this industry involves large numbers of people and even larger amounts of money.

A **prostitute** or **sex trade worker** is an *adult* who trades sex for money or goods. A child or youth—someone under the age of 18—who trades sex for money or goods is not a prostitute, but a **sexually exploited child or youth**. This is an extremely important distinction because it draws attention to the fact that children and youth usually don't make a conscious decision to become involved in prostitution. They are forced or manipulated by others who want sex from them or want to profit from them. Children and youth may not have the skills or resources to resist this manipulation.

Sexual exploitation within the sex trade is sexual abuse. Sexually exploited children and youth are victims of child abuse.

A **pimp** is a person who profits from the earnings of prostitutes or sexually exploited children and youth. While prostitutes and sexually exploited children and youth are not criminals under the *Criminal Code*, pimps are. Pimps may get someone else to lure children and youth into prostitution. These people are called recruiters.

A **recruiter** is an individual, male or female, who actively recruits children or youth for a pimp in return for money or other rewards.

The **john** or **sex trade offender** is the person who buys sex from children and youth. Johns are sometimes referred to as customers, clients, dates or tricks, but whatever the terminology, they are abusing children.

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The Law

Protecting the rights of children and youth is the responsibility of all community members. The first international statement on children's rights was declared by the United Nations in 1959: "The child shall enjoy special protection and shall be given opportunities and facilities, in law and by other means, to enable him to develop mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration."

On November 20, 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Canada ratified the convention on December 13, 1991.

The *Criminal Code of Canada* contains sections used to prosecute perpetrators who sexually abuse and exploit children.

Different acts associated with prostitution, such as procuring or recruiting an individual, living on the avails, or communicating for the purpose of having sex in exchange for money or goods, are criminal offences.

Most prostitution-related activities are criminal offences under the following sections of the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

The following sections further explain the criminal offences.

Section 212: Pimping and Procuring Offences

It is a criminal offence to "procure" or "attempt to procure" anyone for prostitution. **Section 212(1)** prohibits anyone from:

- procuring or attempting to procure a person to become a prostitute, whether in or out of Canada
- procuring a person to enter or leave Canada, for the purpose of prostitution
- procuring or attempting to procure a person to become an inmate of a common bawdy house
- exercising control, direction or influence over a person for the purpose of aiding or compelling them to engage in or carry on prostitution, and
- living wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution.

Under **Section 212(2)** of the *Criminal Code*, every person who lives on the avails of prostitution of another person who is under the age of 18 years is liable upon conviction to a maximum of 14 years imprisonment.

Section 212(2.1) creates an offence of aggravated procuring, with a minimum of five years imprisonment, for a person living on the avails of prostitution of a person under 18 and who, for profit, assists or compels that person to engage in prostitution.

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Section 212(4) is aimed specifically at the offenders of sexually exploited children and youth. It is a criminal offence to, in any place, obtain for consideration or communicate with anyone for the purpose of obtaining for consideration the sexual services of a person who is under the age of 18 years. Consideration means money, drugs, shelter, clothing, a ride home or anything of value. Conviction brings a maximum sentence of five years.

Section 213: The Communicating Offence

It is a criminal offence to communicate or attempt to communicate with any person in any place open to public view (including motor vehicles), for the purpose of:

- engaging in prostitution, or
- obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute.

Section 210: The Common Bawdy House Offences

It is a criminal offence to operate or be an inmate of a common bawdy house (a place that is kept or occupied or resorted to by one or more persons for the purposes of prostitution.)

Section 150.1(1): Age of Consent

The age of consent in Canada for all forms of sexual activity is 16 years. This means that it is not illegal for an adult to have consensual sex with someone who is 16 or older, as long as the adult is not in a position of trust or authority, the youth is not deemed to be dependant on the person, and the relationship is not exploitive toward the youth. Children who are 14 and 15 years old can consent to a sexual activity with a partner as long as the person is less than five years older and there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency, and the relationship is not exploitive. An adult involved in sexual activity with a child under the age of 14 can be charged with a sexual assault-related offence. It is illegal to obtain or attempt to obtain the sexual services of a person under the age of 18 for money or any exchange of items of value.

Enforcing laws aimed at those who sexually exploit children and youth usually requires the testimony of the young person who has been sexually exploited or abused. This task can be difficult as sexually exploited children and youth are generally distrustful of police and adults in authority. They may have been subjected to serious threats and intimidation by pimps and others and are fearful of retaliation if they talk to police or testify in court. Strong support from the community, family and friends is essential if these children and youth are to exit sexual exploitation through prostitution and/or testify.

Protective measures, such as testifying behind screens, bans on publication and permitting evidence via videotaped statements may be allowed at a judge's discretion. In some cases, witness protection services are available from police.

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*

In Alberta, the *Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act* is the central piece of legislation responsible for protecting children and is the legal authority for providing child intervention services. The Act supports the development and well-being of Alberta's children, youth and families while keeping them safe and

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protected. The principles of the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* guide caseworkers in their work with families and specify the circumstances under which a child may be in need of intervention through Alberta Children and Youth Services. It provides for enhancement services to families to ensure that a child will be removed from home only if other less intrusive measures are not sufficient to protect the child. Child intervention services are needed only when a parent cannot adequately protect a child. When it becomes clear that a child's survival, security or development is at risk, child intervention services must become involved.

The *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* (PSECA)

In February 1999, Alberta enacted the *Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act* (PChIP), the first of its kind in Canada. In 2007, the Act was amended to the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* (PSECA). In 2001, the legislation was amended to enhance the protection offered to children and ensure their legal rights are safeguarded.

This legislation offers protection to children who are sexually exploited through their involvement or risk of involvement in prostitution. PSECA offers specialised services through the community or when required by allowing police or Children and Youth Services to apprehend and confine them for their protection and safety. This legislation is based on the following guiding principles:

- Sexually exploited children are victims of sexual abuse.
- Children have a right to physical and emotional safety, security and well-being.
- Children have a right to be safe from sexual abuse and protected from sexual exploitation.
- Children involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, sexual exploitation through prostitution require victim protection services and support.
- Families should be actively involved in ensuring the safety of children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution.
- Children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution and their families do not require child intervention status to receive services.
- Children and their families require access to support services.
- Perpetrators of child sexual abuse—sex trade offenders and pimps—must be held legally accountable for their actions.

Authority to Apprehend

Apprehension is the court-approved act of taking custody of a child. When a children and youth services worker apprehends a child, a director takes over custody of the child. Apprehension is considered if a child's safety is at risk and is considered to be in need of protection.

A child may be apprehended by:

- a police officer, or
- a director under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.*

Under **Section 2(1)** of PSECA, if a police officer or director believes on reasonable and probable grounds that a person is a child and is in need of protection, the police officer or director may apply to a judge of the Court or to a justice of the peace for an order, and the Court may grant an order,

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(a) authorizing the police officer or director to apprehend and convey the child to the child's guardian or to an adult who, in the opinion of the police officer or director, is a responsible adult who has care and control of the child, or
(b) authorizing the police officer to apprehend and convey the child to a protective safe house and authorizing a director to confine the child for up to five days to ensure the safety of the child and to assess the child.

If the judge is certain that the child may be found in a place or premises, the judge may authorize the police officer or director to enter, by force if necessary, that place or premises to search for and apprehend the child.

If a child's life or safety is seriously and imminently endangered, the child may be apprehended without an order under **Section 2(9)** of PSECA.

Restraining Order

Under **Section 6(1)(2)**, the Court of Queen's Bench may issue a restraining order against a person to protect a sexually exploited child. A director, a child or a guardian may apply for a restraining order. An order protects a child from contact or association with a person who has abused the child, or is likely to abuse the child, or has encouraged or is likely to encourage the child to engage in prostitution.

To protect the child, the restraining order may prohibit an individual from contacting the child, directly or indirectly. It may also prohibit a pimp from being in specified areas of the community.

Offence

Under **Section 9**, a person is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more that $25,000 or to imprisonment for a period of not more that 24 months, or to both a fine and imprisonment if the person:

- wilfully causes a child to be in need of protection under PSECA, or
- obstructs or interferes with, or attempts to obstruct or interfere with, a director or a police officer exercising any power or duty under PSECA.

Protective Safe House

A protective safe house is a safe, secure, confined facility that has been designated by the Minister of Children and Youth Services in the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Regulation.* A protective safe house:

- is secured from the outside for the child's safety and has restricted access and seclusion
- is structured to ensure that children, families and staff in the facility are not placed at risk
- supports and promotes family or caregiver contact, access to the child and active involvement during the period of confinement
- has 24-hour staff who are awake at all times and flexible hours of operation reflecting the nocturnal lifestyle of children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution, and
- is not a police holding cell, police cell or young offender facility.

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The protective safe house has qualified, trained staff who operate the program. The staff may include:

- medical professionals
- child protection staff who are appointed and delegated children and youth services workers
- child care professionals who have knowledge and skills in intervening with sexually exploited children
- young people who have left the streets and can act as mentors for children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution, and
- a case co-ordinator who assumes responsibility for co-ordinating the services at the protective safe house and services following the initial five-day assessment.

In cases where a director believes a child's life or safety continues to be at risk because of his or her involvement in sexual exploitation through prostitution, they may apply to a court for up to two further confinement periods of up to 21 days each. The additional confinement provides for a period of stabilization to assist the child in breaking the cycle of abuse in a safe and secure environment. During the 21-day confinement, the child has an opportunity to access a number of services including drug and alcohol counselling, medical supports, counselling and psychological services, and educational and life-skills support. These services are tailored to meet the individual needs of each child in a holistic manner.

Communities across Alberta have established a continuum of services and supports for sexually exploited children and youth, including followup workers and residential care and treatment programs that meet the identified needs of children and families under PSECA.

Roles under PSECA

- Police Officer – The police officer's role is to apprehend the child (with or without an order) and take the child to a guardian, a director or a protective safe house. The police officer must notify a children and youth services director after apprehending a child.

- Child and Family Services Authorities – Child and Family Services Authorities are responsible for ensuring PSECA's programs and services are provided in their communities.

- Children and Youth Services Director – The children and youth services director's role is to provide community support programs and protective safe houses to help children end their involvement in sexual exploitation through prostitution.

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Sexually Exploited Children and Youth are Victims of Child Abuse

The definition of **child** is determined by the age of majority in each province or territory; the range across Canada is 16-19 years of age. In Alberta, it is 18 years old. Anyone under the age of majority is a child. In Canada, the legal age for consensual sex is 16 (see "The Law" on page four for more information about the age of consent).

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional, psychological or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that causes damage to a child. When a child or youth is sexually exploited, he or she is abused on all levels. There can be no sexual abuse without emotional abuse, and in the case of sexually exploited youth, severe physical abuse is nearly always present also.

The *Canadian Red Cross RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention* program outlines the types and patterns of abuse that can occur in a young person's life. Emotional abuse is defined in six different ways to illustrate the multiple ways that words and actions can destroy a child's sense of self. Emotional abuse can occur on its own, but it is always a factor with sexual and physical abuse.

Emotional abuse is a chronic attack on a child's self-esteem and development. It is psychologically destructive behaviour by a person in a position of power, authority or trust. The following are all forms of emotional abuse and examples of how pimps may emotionally abuse children.

- Rejecting: refusing to acknowledge, believe, hear or support the child's worth or the legitimacy of his or her needs.
- Isolating: separating the child from others, cutting the child off from normal social experiences and resulting in extreme isolation.
- Terrorizing: coercing by intimidation and causing a state of extreme fear, violent dread, and fright. Children can be terrorized by observing violence.
- Corrupting: rendering the child antisocial or malsocialized, to change from good to bad, to encourage destructive, antisocial behaviour.
- Ignoring: failing to provide sensitive, responsive caregiving, to deprive a child of essential stimulation and responsiveness, to interact only when necessary, to be psychologically unavailable.
- Exploiting/adultifying: making use of someone for one's own advantage or profit, or to make excessive, age-inappropriate demands. Children are lured or forced into prostitution-related activities and are used by sex trade offenders for sexual gratification, and the desire to exert power and control.

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Physical abuse occurs when a person in a position of trust or authority purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child. This may take the form of slapping, hitting, shaking, pulling hair or ears, throwing, shoving, beating and burning. Sexually exploited children are physically abused in a number of ways, including the following:

- Pimps routinely employ intimidation and threaten severe beatings. Enforcement by pimps may involve beatings, burnings, cutting hair, forcing children to stand outside for long periods of time in cold weather, and introducing and coercing them to take illicit, addictive drugs.
- Physical abuse at the hands of the sex trade offender includes beatings, choking and use of weapons.

Physical neglect is chronic inattention to the basic necessities of life, including adequate clothing, shelter, nutrition, hygiene, education, medical and dental care, moral guidance and rest. In the world of child sexual exploitation, pimps control the money. In situations that are abusive, food, clothing and shelter are substandard leading to malnourishment, sickness and disease.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual gratification.

Contact sexual abuse includes:

- being touched and fondled in sexual areas, which are the vagina, vulva, penis, scrotum, anus, buttocks and breasts
- being forced to touch another person's sexual areas
- being kissed or held in a sexual manner
- being forced to perform oral sex
- being forced to have vaginal or anal intercourse
- forced vaginal or anal penetration with an object.

Non-contact sexual abuse includes:

- exposure to obscene calls or remarks on the telephone, computers or in notes
- exposure to flashing
- exposure to pornography
- being forced to witness sexual acts
- intrusive questions or comments
- indecent exposure
- being forced to pose for sexual photographs or videos.

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Profiles of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth

Sexually Exploited Children and Youth

Children and youth from all social, economic and cultural backgrounds are targeted and recruited into sexual exploitation through prostitution. Any child or youth can be vulnerable to recruitment into sexual exploitation.

The average age of entry into the sex trade is 15 years of age in Alberta, with children as young as 10 identified on police files. In Canada, it is estimated that children under 18 represent 10-12 per cent of the individuals involved in prostitution. A disproportionately high number of Aboriginal children are sexually exploited. Both boys and girls can be recruited into sexual exploitation through prostitution. Although 90 per cent are female, male prostitution activities occur and are believed to be underreported.

Many children and youth who are sexually exploited also have a history of neglect, or physical or sexual abuse. Often they have run away to escape maltreatment or other problems at home and/or in schools or communities. Often they are homeless and trading sexual acts for survival, e.g., food, shelter, transportation or drugs or alcohol.

Why Children and Youth Get Involved

While it is difficult to draw a clear profile of sexually exploited children and youth, there are a number of characteristics and circumstances that make some young people more vulnerable. Running away and a history of abuse appear to be key predisposing factors for sexual exploitation.

Children and youth who get involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution may be:

- running *from* something:
  - maltreatment (sexual, physical and/or emotional) at home or in the community
  - disruptive homes where alcohol/substance abuse, parental conflict, family/child interaction problems, mental illness and/or domestic violence are present
  - school problems (academic or social)
  - loneliness
  - stereotyping
  - racism.
- running *to* something:
  - love
  - acceptance
  - independence and control
  - freedom.

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In addition, they may have:

- low self-esteem and self-worth
- poor academic performance
- learning disabilities
- fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- experienced a loss of cultural identity (alienation from one's own culture may undermine cultural pride and contribute to low self-esteem)
- had early sexual experiences
- sexual identity crises
- developed "tough" identities through exposure to street life
- unconventional peers (e.g., age inappropriate)
- become involved in criminal activities and have criminal records
- addiction to drugs, alcohol or other substances.

Males versus Females

There are many similarities between male and female children and youth who are sexually exploited. However, there are some key differences.

Females:

- may be easy prey for recruiters and pimps because of vulnerabilities
- may be under the control of a pimp or more dependent
- are usually sexually exploited by individuals of the opposite sex
- are more at risk from violent customers.

Males:

- are not usually under the control of a pimp and are more independent
- are often introduced to the sex trade by a peer
- may be heterosexual or homosexual, but attract male sex trade offenders
- interact on the street but also frequent clubs and other venues
- are usually sexually exploited by individuals of the same sex and are at risk from homophobic young male "gay bashers."

The Voices of Children and Youth

Some reasons given by children and youth for their entry into sexual exploitation through prostitution include:

- rejection by the family or being kicked out of the home
- active coercion or recruitment by a pimp
- involvement of one or more family members in the sex trade
- a difficult family or other living situation
- influence of friends and peers, and attraction to the perceived glamour of the street lifestyle
- a desire for what may be perceived to be adventure, freedom and independence.

Other reasons children and youth enter the sex trade reflect larger social issues and may be based on myths and media images, including:

- belief in the possibility of easy money, which may appeal to young people who need quick cash and have few employment alternatives or skills

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- cultural and media images that exploit youth and childhood sexuality, which promote a perception of adolescent culture centred on lifestyles that are adultified and preoccupied with mature subjects
- media and entertainment depiction of the prostitute as a glorified outlaw or a glamorous figure
- some social acceptance of prostitution as "the oldest profession" and the fact that it is not illegal to be a prostitute.

Recognizing Children at Risk

It is not always easy to know what is going on in children's lives. Adolescence can be a challenging developmental stage. Adolescents struggle with issues concerning body image, sexuality, educational and occupational goals, setting values, achieving emotional maturity, developing good relationships with peers, becoming independent and establishing their own personal identities. Difficulties in any of these areas can leave them vulnerable, especially if they are not in a safe, caring environment.

Any child or youth can exhibit one or more of these indicators depending on his or her developmental stage. When a pattern of behaviours indicates that a child may be vulnerable and at risk, caregivers should seek consultation with an expert. Prompt consultation with the police or Children and Youth Services is essential if a child or youth is at risk of becoming sexually exploited. Listed below are some signs to watch for if you suspect a child or youth may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

Behaviours that a child may be vulnerable and at risk can include:

Attitude

The child or youth:

- withdraws physically and emotionally from home and family, is cold and unconnected
- has extreme mood swings
- is secretive and reserved
- lies about where he or she was or is going
- is confrontational, aggressive
- engages in abusive behaviour or language.

Routine

The child or youth:

- drops usual friends for a new group that includes children from other schools or communities; they may be older
- skips school
- has a significant drop in grades
- opts out of traditional family events
- becomes a night person, staying out late, unable to sleep at night, sleeps excessively during the day.

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Language

The child or youth:

- adopts slang mannerisms never used before (e.g., ruder, cruder street talk)
- uses disconnected speech (one- or two-word codes)
- uses labels when referring to friends or self (e.g., adopting a street name).

Physical Appearance/Hygiene

The child or youth:

- dresses more provocatively
- uses excessive makeup and time getting ready to go out
- has sexualized behaviour (e.g., inappropriate sexual acting out or display of body parts)
- has bruises or other signs of abuse on his or her body.

Clues around the House

The child or youth:

- has unexplained money
- has new and expensive clothing or trinkets with explanations that don't add up
- packs a change of clothes when going out
- has drug-associated objects (e.g., cans with holes, burnt knives, twisted spoons, rolling papers)
- acquires a pager or cell phone
- has long distance phone bills for cell numbers or numbers that don't show up on call display
- receives an excessive number of texts
- has matchbook covers with hidden cellular/pager numbers inside
- has business cards and receipts from places that are unusual for young teens to visit
- receives phone calls and/or texts from strangers at odd hours of the day or night; receives hang-up calls
- has many condom packages
- has weapons.

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The Realities of Sexual Exploitation

Once children and youth are recruited into sexual exploitation, they are quickly exposed to a range of risks, including lack of power over their lives, violence, alcohol and drug addiction, sexually transmitted diseases and other illnesses.

Lack of Power

Being aware of personal power is critical to understanding how power can be used or misused when interacting with young people. Abuse is the result of the misuse of power.

Power is having:

- choices about who you are and what you do
- access to resources, including support, nurturance, information, education, mobility, legal protection, a healthy environment, money
- the capacity to participate in decisions affecting one's day-to-day living.

Misuse of power is one way sexually exploited children are abused.

Initially, some children are led to believe that they have power and are loved, appreciated and wanted for their prostitution-related activities.

Pimps control most aspects of prostitutes' lives, including:

- their finances
- what they wear—high heels, skimpy skirts and tops are the norm in some communities, while tear-away track suits are preferred in others
- who their friends are
- the hours they "work," and where they "work"
- their nightly quotas of clients
- when and where they can go.

Pimps strip children of all contact to their former lives. Children are watched, monitored and stalked continuously to prevent any attempt to reconnect with their previous lives or leave the street. Many sexually exploited children and youth are moved from city to city, further distancing them from former contacts. Although prostitutes are paid for sex, pimps control all the money earned. In return for a night of abuse, sexually exploited children may be rewarded with a hamburger, coffee and pack of cigarettes.

To maintain absolute power and control, the pimp may set rules. For example, the sexually exploited child:

- cannot leave the job without permission
- cannot visit nightclubs
- cannot sit in cabs or warm up near heating vents, even in cold weather
- must maintain a set quota
- must let the pimp set the fee for services rendered.

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Violence

The lives of sexually exploited children are full of life-threatening danger. Pimps, sex trade offenders and bystanders may regularly harass them. Pimps use a variety of violent means to keep these children involved and ensure they make enough money, including

- demanding fines when rules are violated (virtually impossible for the children to pay as they have limited or no financial resources)
- demanding 24-hour work days, seven days a week
- using physical punishment
- selling/trading them to another pimp
- threatening the children or their families with death
- emotional abuse (e.g., rejection, abandonment, blaming, manipulation)
- forbidding them to use condoms or other protection when having sex with the pimps.

Dr. McIntyre's 1994 study indicates that young women who run from abusive home environments continue to experience high levels of violence in their personal lives at the hands of boyfriends, sex trade offenders and pimps. Sex trade offenders routinely sexually assault, beat, kidnap, abandon, rob and even murder children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Most young people involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution have lives characterized by the abuse of alcohol and drugs. This abuse can often lead to serious adverse reactions, which require detoxification and/or hospitalization. Sexually exploited youth often use these substances to cope with emotional pain and to survive the day-to-day trauma of sexual exploitation. Pimps encourage usage in order to keep them dependent.

Youth and children with substance-abuse problems are at a higher risk of infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) because they may have unprotected sex with multiple partners whose health statuses are unknown. Sexually exploited youth who inject drugs place themselves at additional risk if they are responsive to demands for unsafe sexual services in order to obtain needed drugs.

Alcohol or Sexually Transmitted Infections and Other Illnesses

Sexually exploited youth are exposed to multiple health risks. Their diet may be extremely restricted, leading to increased vulnerability to disease and illness. Living on the street and eating unhealthy food make them more susceptible to common ailments. They may use condoms with sex trade offenders but not with their pimps, and many have multiple sex partners. This results in unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV.

The consequences of untreated and undetected STIs may be:

- depression or suicide
- pelvic inflammatory disease

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- infertility (male/female)
- babies born with congenital abnormalities/infant mortality
- impotence
- mental anguish (that may last a lifetime)
- increased susceptibility to certain types of cancer (testicular, cervical)
- death.

Use of Technologies

Over the past several years, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of technology by sex trade offenders as a tool to exploit or contact vulnerable children and youth.

Common examples of this use of technology include:

- pimps who use cellular phones or pagers to monitor and control the movements of sexually exploited children and youth and connect them to potential "customers"
- children and youth being lured to meet offenders ("johns") through Internet chat rooms, personals, social networks, and advertising sites or through newspaper telepersonals
- children exploited through Internet pornography or child sexual abuse imagery websites.

Although awareness and understanding of the extent of this issue continue to develop, it is clear that parents and other professionals who are involved with the care of children and youth need to be cognizant of the potential dangers that children face if their use of technology is not supervised or monitored appropriately. It is important to ensure that together you have established rules for Internet use, and that you maintain an open line of communication about technology use.

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Myths and Stereotypes of Prostitution

One area public awareness programs need to focus on is misinformation and stereotypes. Children and youth may be seduced by the perceived life of glamour portrayed in movies only to discover the opposite is true. Below, some popular myths about adults and children involved in prostitution are challenged.

Myth: ***Prostitution is a victimless crime.***
The reality is that prostitution is a harsh, brutal life associated with a high degree of poverty, violence and disease. Sexually exploited children and youth are victims. So are their families, communities and the people who care about them.

Myth: ***Prostitution has always been around and is part of human nature. It is the "oldest profession."***
The reality is that accepting prostitution as part of human nature or describing it as a "profession" dismisses the serious issue that children and youth are involved in prostitution, and they are being sexually abused and exploited.

Myth: ***Prostitutes are there by choice.***
The reality is that many children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution have a history of sexual, physical or emotional abuse. Low self-esteem, isolation, fear, poor life skills and no access to helping resources or support may leave these children vulnerable. Children who are being sexually exploited through prostitution are victims of abuse—they are not able to consent, legally or emotionally. Sexually exploited children are not involved by choice—they are often coerced, forced, and for some, engaged as a means of survival due to limited ability to access other resources. The average age of entry into the sex trade is 15 in Alberta, which means most prostitutes were sexually exploited youth.

Myth: ***Prostitution is a deterrent to sexual crimes.***
The reality is that prostitution-related activities are sexual crimes. Using the services of a sexually exploited child is child sexual abuse.

Myth: ***Prostitution only occurs on the streets.***
The reality is that prostitution can occur anywhere. Sexual services from children can be bought on the streets, through escort services, massage services, hotels, pool halls, homes, truck stops, Internet sites and work camps. Anytime there is an exchange of money, goods or services for sex, it is prostitution.

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Pimps and Recruiters

For the most part, perpetrators, also known as pimps or recruiters, lure children into prostitution where they become sexually exploited. A pimp is an individual, male or female, who controls the activities of children involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution through force or coercion. Pimps may also recruit.

A recruiter is an individual, male or female, who actively recruits children for a pimp in return for money or other rewards.

Profile of a Pimp

A pimp can be male or female, of any age, from any ethnic background and fit any physical description. The majority of pimps are male. However, most pimps share certain qualities, such as they:

- try to appear to be a peer
- are often associated with other criminal activities
- may pose as a friend or boyfriend who is nice to the family—polite, considerate, a smooth talker
- can easily target females to this lifestyle—they know how to look for children's weaknesses
- have a strong desire for money and personal status within a peer group (money, cars, jewelry)
- may be involved in drugs
- may carry weapons
- may carry cell phones or pagers
- are manipulative
- often have violent backgrounds (e.g., assault charges, abusive histories)
- have one or more "girlfriends/boyfriends" whom they exploit in the sex trade
- use total control and/or possessive behaviour to isolate the children from their friends
- can be a family member.

Profile of a Recruiter

A female recruiter is generally "owned" by a male or female pimp, while a male recruiter often receives payment or rewards from the pimp.

Recruiters:

- can be male or female
- are often similar in age to the potential victim and wear the same type of clothing
- offer friendship and the image of an exciting life to potential victims
- always appear helpful and caring to the children.

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Other Profiles of Recruiters

Children may also be recruited into prostitution by:

- family members who, due to poverty or to support addictions, may force children into sexually exploitive activities
- an adult who convinces a child that they have a relationship and, in return for sexual activity, the adult provides basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, drugs, alcohol, etc.)
- a peer group who may convince or threaten another peer into prostitution-related activities in order to make money
- adults or older youth who provide money, drugs and alcohol in exchange for sexual activities at parties
- individuals involved in pornography who recruit children for this purpose
- involvement with escort or massage agencies.

Sex Trade Offenders

Little is known about adults who try to buy sex from children and youth. They are often referred to as johns, dates or tricks. Until recently, there have been few charges and convictions for the criminal offence of obtaining for consideration, or communicating with anyone for the purpose of obtaining for consideration, the sexual services of a person who is under the age of 18 years.

It is important not to make any assumptions about sex trade offenders. Both police records and interviews with sex trade workers indicate that adults of all ages and types (e.g., married and single, low-, middle- and high-income professions, all ethnic backgrounds) sexually exploit children and youth.

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Recruitment

Recruitment can and does take place in any public venue where children and youth spend time.

Some common places where recruiting can take place are:

- school grounds
- stores, video arcades, strip malls near schools
- public transit areas (e.g., bus stops, LRT stations)
- shopping malls, especially food courts
- coffee shops
- community centres
- areas where prostitution activities take place
- bars, lounges, pool halls
- youth centres, group homes
- truck stops, gas stations, bus depots
- any place children are identified by pimps and recruiters as being vulnerable.

How Children and Youth are Targeted

Pimps use a step-by-step process to exert control over children and youth. This grooming for sexual exploitation usually involves gradually luring them away from their support network until they are completely separated from friends, family and home. As a result of this manipulation, they adopt the values of the street and pimps take control over the children's lives.

Listed below are some of the tactics pimps and recruiters use to lure children and youth into sexual exploitation through prostitution.

- Seduction – pimps seduce young girls as a way to recruit them. They pose as boyfriends, gaining the girls' trust through promises, emotional manipulation and gifts (e.g., clothes, cigarettes, drugs, alcohol).
- Isolation – pimps slowly separate the children or youth from family, friends and school, so the young people become reliant solely upon the pimps.
- Coercion – pimps commonly use intimidation and pressure to force children and youth into prostitution-related activities. This intimidation takes various forms, such as threats to harm the children or their families, expose their sexual activities to family and friends, or psychological abuse.
- Violence – pimps use violence to force youth into engaging in sexual exploitation through prostitution. Although less common than other tactics, kidnapping may be used to recruit girls.

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During Recruitment

There are three common stages of recruitment—the lure, trust and payback stages.

The Lure Stage

In the lure stage, the pimp/recruiter:

- pays special attention to the child
- offers romance, support, parties, drugs
- promises increased popularity in a new peer group.

In the lure stage, the child or youth:

- may have low self-esteem, is flattered by having a "boyfriend" and by the attention he gives her
- receives gifts and attention, has more money, and has a new peer group.

The Trust Stage

In the trust stage, the pimp/recruiter may:

- sell youth on the glamour of street life
- say "I love you" and have sex with the child
- challenge boundaries set by parents or caregivers to further separate the child from his or her family (e.g., if parents set a curfew, the pimp says that the parents don't trust the child, don't treat the child like an adult and that the child is more mature than the parents think).

In the trust stage, the child or youth may:

- disregard boundaries and curfews
- become argumentative
- ignore his or her previous peer group
- exhibit sexual behaviour
- acquire a street name.

The Payback Stage

At the payback stage, the pimp/recruiter may:

- send the child out on "dates," saying, "pretend it's me," or "you'll do this if you really love me"
- say "you owe me," and be emotionally and physically abusive
- use threats and totally control the child.

In the payback stage, the child or youth may be:

- completely separated from family and support system
- exposed to violence and emotional abuse, be drug dependent
- forced to work the street or indoors (e.g., trick pad, escort agency).

The child involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution is now totally separated from family and support systems, is trapped, has become dependent on the pimp, blames them self and fears abandonment.

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Barriers to Leaving

As children and youth become entrenched in the lifestyle of the sex trade, it becomes increasingly difficult to leave.

Common barriers to leaving the sex trade include:

- realities of sexual exploitation
  - being under the control of a pimp who threatens violence
  - drug and alcohol addiction—use of these substances often increases once children or youth are sexually exploited because it is a way of coping with the loneliness and stress of life
  - development of habits that make the transition out of the lifestyle difficult (e.g., working at night and sleeping during the day)
  - feeling more at home among what is perceived to be a non-judging, interdependent street community than in the mainstream world
  - addiction to the lifestyle—the sense of freedom, independence and constant stimulation can be psychologically addictive
  - having secured the street smarts necessary to survive the lifestyle, and being reluctant to give it up.
- lack of support
  - loss of family support
  - lack of community support
  - lack of positive role models
  - lack of educational credentials, job training or work skills
  - fear of not being able to fit into a mainstream life
  - feeling judged by social workers, police, judges, counsellors, teachers, parents and siblings
  - having difficulty maintaining normal relationships
  - becoming discouraged by the long, difficult process of leaving the streets, particularly when facing such factors as involvement with pimps, the use of drugs and the unavailability of other work.
- low self-esteem
  - poor self-esteem and the associated belief that they don't have any skills and no other choices but working the streets
  - feeling ashamed and worthless.

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Breaking Free

The lives of sexually exploited children can be completely controlled. This control is maintained through threats and acts of violence toward the children and their families, blackmail, intimidation, supply of drugs—whatever it takes. Most are isolated from healthy support systems and totally dependent on their pimps both emotionally and financially. Most do not trust adults. These children often have low self-esteem and no connections in the community, leaving them with few personal resources. In addition, the addiction to substances becomes the primary health concern in the crisis intervention stage. Any attempt at intervention must focus on slowly building trust, and setbacks should be expected.

Getting Out

Breaking free of sexual exploitation and the street lifestyle is not easy. It is especially difficult for children who are under the control of pimps, addicted to drugs or alcohol, and manipulated into believing that their only place is on the streets.

However, there are several factors that may bring young people to the point of leaving the sex trade. They may include, but are not limited to:

- being sexually exploited for too short a period of time to become entrenched in the life (e.g., less than a month)
- getting away from pimps
- experiencing trauma, such as the death of a friend, a drug overdose, or a rape or beating by a sex trade offender or pimp
- being afraid of further violence from pimps, sex trade offenders or other sex trade workers
- becoming ill (e.g., by contracting a sexually transmitted infection, or through poor nutrition)
- becoming pregnant
- becoming disillusioned with the street lifestyle and subculture.

Support and Assistance

There are a number of factors that support and assist young people to break the cycle of sexual exploitation. They may include, but are not limited to:

- establishing relationships with partners who discourage involvement in the sex trade and who are supportive during the transition
- finding supportive, non-judgemental adults, such as family members, counsellors, social workers, youth workers or life partners, who are willing to help and stand by through the long process of leaving the sex trade
- obtaining financial assistance
- obtaining housing
- finding friends or role models in another area of work
- getting involved in training programs in order to gain employable skills
- finding jobs.

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Even when children and youth do succeed in leaving the sex trade, adjusting to the mainstream world can be difficult as they struggle with feelings of loneliness, alienation and lack of connection with their families, former friends, schoolmates and community.

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What Parents and Concerned Adults Can Do

The following are suggestions for parents and caregivers who suspect their child or another child is at risk of being recruited into sexual exploitation through prostitution.

Promoting a Positive Environment

- Communicate with the child on an ongoing basis.
- Set expectations appropriate to the child's age.
- Listen to the child; make sure he or she feels valued and important.
- Stay in contact with the school regarding attendance and changes in behaviour.
- Ensure that the child has regular medical/dental checkups for early identification of any problems that may arise.
- Get to know the child's friends and find out their phone numbers. Keep in touch with friends' parents in order to verify information.
- Get involved in your child's school and community.

What to Do When You're Concerned

- Have a one-to-one conversation with the child in a safe place (e.g., home, school) when he or she is likely to be open to hearing what you have to say. In a rational, caring (but unemotional), non-judgemental way, explain your concerns.
- Seek helping resources for yourself and your family.
- Educate your child about the dangers of street life.

If You Believe Your Child is Being Sexually Exploited

- Search out details of the child's friends and associates. Ask where they go to school. Where do they work? Check the child's non-verbal behaviour for evasiveness, discomfort, etc. Follow up and verify responses.
- Keep a record of the child's:
  - activities
  - friends (names, nicknames, descriptions)
    - phone numbers
    - places they hang out
    - cars—type, colour, licence plate numbers.
- Contact and seek help from street outreach workers in your community. They understand youth and develop good rapport with them. Contact your local Alberta Children and Youth Services office (see the list of Child and Family Services Authorities on page 31), youth-serving agency, etc.

If a child you know is actively involved in sexual exploitation through prostitution.

- Be aware that there are supports available to assist you.
- Notify police through the school resource officer who can establish rapport with the child and monitor the situation, or contact the local police vice unit or RCMP.

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- Make a report by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-KIDS (5437), or contact your local Alberta Children and Youth Services office (see the list of Child and Family Services Authorities on page 31). They can begin an assessment and help the family contact other resources, such as counsellors.
- Keep extensive notes of meetings and phone calls with others working with you and the child.
- Join a support group; if there isn't one in your community, start one.
- Educate yourself.
- Ensure your own safety by involving the appropriate authorities and using the resources available to you.

Any person who knows of or suspects that a child is in need of intervention has the legal duty to report it to Children and Youth Services.

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Resources

To make a referral or inquire about supports and resources available in your area, contact your local Children and Youth Services office. See the list of Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) below or visit www.child.alberta.ca/home/local_offices.cfm to find your local office.

You can also call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-KIDS (5437).

Additional information and publications on child sexual exploitation can be found at www.child.alberta.ca/home/590.cfm.

Alberta Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs)

Southwest Alberta CFSA (Region 1)
107 Palliser Centre, 3305-18th Avenue N
Lethbridge, AB T1H 5S1
Phone: 403-381-5543, Fax: 403-381-5608
www.southwestalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

Southeast Alberta CFSA (Region 2)
1st Floor Provincial Building, 346-3rd Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0G7
Phone: 403-529-3753, Fax: 403-528-5244
www.southeastalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

Calgary and Area CFSA (Region 3)
2nd Floor, 1240 Kensington Road NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3P7
Phone: 403-297-6100, Fax: 403-297-7214
www.calgaryandareacfsa.alberta.ca

Central Alberta CFSA (Region 4)
3rd Floor Bishop's Place, 4826 Ross Street
Red Deer, AB T4N 1X4
Phone: 403-341-8642, Fax: 403-341-8654
www.centralalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

East Central Alberta CFSA (Region 5)
PO Box 300, 4811-49 Avenue
Killam, AB T0B 2L0
Phone: 780-385-7160, Fax: 780-385-7163
www.eastcentralalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

Edmonton and Area CFSA (Region 6)
7th Floor Oxbridge Place, 9820-106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2J6
Phone: 780-422-3355, Fax: 780-422-6864
www.edmontonandareacfsa.alberta.ca

North Central Alberta CFSA (Region 7)
2nd Floor Administration Building, 5143-50 Street
Barrhead, AB T7N 1A6
Phone: 780-305-2440, Fax: 780-305-2444
www.northcentralalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

Northwest Alberta CFSA (Region 8)
4th Floor 214 Place South, 10130-99 Avenue
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 2V4
Phone: 780-538-5122, Fax: 780-538-5137
www.northwestalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

Northeast Alberta CFSA (Region 9)
4th Floor Provincial Building, 9915 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4
Phone: 780-743-7416, Fax: 780-743-7474
www.northeastalbertacfsa.alberta.ca

Métis Settlements CFSA (Region 10)
210, 10335-172 Street
Edmonton, AB T5S 1K9
Phone: 780-427-1033, Fax: 780-415-0177
www.metissettlementscfsa.alberta.ca

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